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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: CLOSURE ORDERS FOR EAST JERUSALEM PALESTINIAN
INSTITUTIONS COMING UP FOR RENEWAL

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

NO SIGN THAT CLOSURE ORDER WILL LAPSE

¶1. (C) On January 19, Ishaq Budeiri, General Manager of the Arab Studies Society at Orient House, told Post he had received no indication that the GOI is considering allowing the current closure order on Orient House to lapse when it expires in February 2010. Budeiri said that in the past, renewal had been pro forma. He was hopeful that the GOI would allow at least Orient House's academic wing, the Arab Studies Society, to reopen, even if the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) remained banned from political activities at the site.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE?

¶2. (C) Former Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qader noted in conversations with Post the same day that the re-opening of any Palestinian political institution in East Jerusalem would be "symbolically important." Abdel Qader expressed uncertainty, however, over whether the re-opening of these institutions alone would be sufficient to overcome PLO concerns over resuming direct negotiations with the GOI absent a complete moratorium on settlement activity. Rafiq Husseini, Chief of Staff to President Abbas, agreed with this assessment in a separate conversation with Post.

¶3. (U) On January 19, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store met with Husseini at the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. The Israeli English-language daily Haaretz reported that the meeting was the first held between a PA official and a foreign diplomat in East Jerusalem since the closure of Orient House in 2001.

BACKGROUND

¶4. (C) On August 9, 2001, a terrorist suicide bombing at a Jerusalem pizza restaurant resulted in the deaths of fifteen civilians. The following day, the GOI Ministry of Interior implemented closure orders against eight Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, including Orient House (the de facto PLO office in Jerusalem), the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, and the Arab Higher Council for Tourism. The closure orders, which were valid for six months, have since then been renewed by the GOI on a rolling basis, and will next come up for renewal in early February.

¶5. (C) The Roadmap calls for the GOI to reopen the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce "and other closed Palestinian

institutions in East Jerusalem," in accordance with prior agreements between the parties. At the GOI's request, in November 2008, the Chamber provided a letter stating that if allowed to re-open, it would operate independently of the PA (a proviso intended to meet Roadmap requirements). Chamber officials tell Post that there has so far been no response from the GOI.

RUBINSTEIN